CHURCH HISTORY

Chapter 49 – The Church Seeks Cooperation & Union

1. *Two Forces: Separation and Cooperation*
   a. *From the very beginning of the Reformation a tendency to divide showed itself in Protestantism. Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin did not see eye to eye in all things.*
   b. *But also from the very beginning efforts were made to overcome this tendency. One such effort, though unsuccessful, was the conference between Luther and Zwingli held at Marburg. John Calvin, through his letters and teaching and by means of conferences, succeeded in bringing a degree of unity into the Protestant movement.*
   c. *The first effort in modern times to encourage co-operation among Protestant churches was the organization in London, in 1846, of the Evangelical Alliance.*
   d. *As time wore on, divisions in the ranks of the Protestants increased. This was the case especially in America with its separation of Church and State and entire freedom of religion. Today there are some three hundred denominations in the United States alone.*
   e. *By church federation we mean the formation of an organization composed of separate de-nominations for dealing with problems common to all. By church union we mean the uniting of two or more denominations into one.*
2. *Federations of Churches Are Formed*
   a. *1908 Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. It was very active in considering and making pronouncements on social, economic, and political questions. Most of the larger Protestant denominations affiliated with this council. Modernistic theology exerted a great influence in this organization.*
   b. *Federal Council was replaced in 1950 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ the U.S. A. This new council included the churches of the older Federal Council plus various other national groups of Protestant church members. Eastern Orthodox groups were also affiliated with it. This council has become a very influential body, claiming to represent the great majority of Protestants in the United States.*
   c. *the National Association of Evangelicals and the American Council of Christian Churches, agreed in their loyalty to orthodox Christianity, but differed somewhat in their structure and in their attitude toward the National Council of Churches*
3. *Church Union Proceeds at a Rapid Pace*
   a. *Where there are differences of views on fundamental doctrines or on forms of worship and church government, separation of Christians into different groups is unavoidable. This is the more true because matters of religion are the subjects of convictions, not mere casual opinions*
   b. *Many of the leaders in the large denominations have been working for church union; In 1939 the Methodist Church in the United States was formed out of three former denominations. The United Church of Christ is the product of several mergers which united four earlier denominations*
   c. *United Church of Canada, formed in 1925 out of former Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches; and the Church of South India, which was formed in 1947 and also included bodies with widely differing backgrounds*
4. *The World Council of Churches*
   a. *The largest effort of Protestants toward unity is found in the World Council of Churches; in 1948, of the World Council of Churches, which has as its purpose to carry on the work of the two world movements for Life and Work and for Faith and Order and to encourage co-operation in matters of world-wide concern; Some orthodox churches have consistently declined to apply for membership in this council, fearing that it is too liberal in its outlook or that it will lead to a super-church in which the biblical truth will not be recognized*
5. *Other Types of Ecumenical Activity*
   a. *"Ecumenical," which means "the whole inhabited world," is the term used to describe these various movements toward Christian unity*
   b. *The earliest of these was the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (formerly called the Presbyterian Alliance), which has existed since 1875. Other world confessional alliances are the International Congregational Council, the World Methodist Council, the Baptist World Alliance, the Lutheran World Federation, and the International Council of Christian Churches. The Re-formed Ecumenical Synod, formed in 1946, is a similar organization*
   c. *The Roman Catholic Church, which for a long time had ignored Protestants, has shown increasing interest in conversations with them in recent years. The Second Vatican Council, which was held intermittently from 1962 to 1965, invited Protestant observers to be present*